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Canada's New Government makes $150 million commitment to International Polar Year 2007-2008

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Gatineau, Thursday, March 1, 2007 -- At a special event at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Que., the Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, and the Honourable John Baird, Minister of the Environment, officially launched International Polar Year (IPY) 2007-2008 in Canada and confirmed $150 million in federal funding for an ambitious program by Canada's New Government for International Polar Year.

With the participation of thousands of scientists from more than 60 nations, International Polar Year 2007-2008 is the largest-ever international program of scientific research focussed on the Earth's polar regions.

In outlining Canada's New Government's contribution, Minister Prentice announced 44 Canadian science and research projects that were selected to receive International Polar Year funding from the federal government. All of the selected projects are aligned with one of two priority areas of Canada's New Government's International Polar Year science program, namely: climate change impacts and adaptation and the health and well-being of Northern communities.

Other program areas will ensure valuable data is managed, and that support is provided for research licensing bodies and processes that are targeting all Canadians, particularly youth and Northerners. Through training and capacity building, a strong next generation of Northern scientists will be developed.

"Canada's Arctic has played a vital role in our development as a nation and in defining our national character," Minister Prentice said. "International Polar Year represents an outstanding opportunity for Canada to showcase its leadership in northern science and research, to help protect Canada's environment, our northern communities, and the sovereignty of our Arctic."

"Changes in the Arctic due to climate change are a signal, an early warning to Canadians," said Environment Minister John Baird. "These projects will give us a better understanding of the effects of climate change and other pollution falling on the North and that will lead to further actions we need to protect our water, land and citizens."

With nearly 25 per cent of the entire Arctic located within its boundaries, Canada is set to be a major centre of activity for International Polar Year 2007-2008.

"Canada was instrumental in ensuring that for the first time a human dimension will be included in the international focus of International Polar Year, which will see Northerners benefit directly from the research taking place," said Ian Church, Chair of the Canada's National International Polar Year Committee.

Northerners will be actively engaged and will have opportunities to contribute to research activities throughout International Polar Year. All Canadian research proposals had to meet strict criteria to

promote Northern participation, including skills training to build long-term Northern research capacity and foster a new generation of Northern scientists.

International Polar Year 2007-2008 is the first initiative of its kind in 50 years and is only the fourth such undertaking in history. The last similar endeavour, International Geophysical Year held in 1957-1958, helped pave the way for the space age with the launch of the world's first satellites, and ultimately resulted in the ratification of the Antarctic Treaty in 1961.

"While building upon an impressive legacy of scientific achievement, this International Polar Year promises to foster greater connections and understanding among all Canadians and the world," concluded Minister Prentice.

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- Canadian IPY Secretariat
- IPY International Program Office
- Selected Research and Science Projects
- Notes for an address by The Honourable Jim Prentice, to launch International Polar Year 2007-2008: March 1, 2007

All times are reflected in Atlantic time
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